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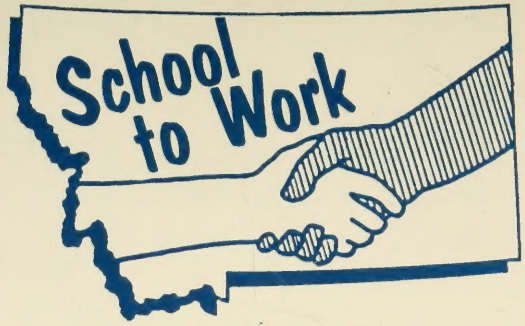

SCHOOL TO WORK OPPORTUNITIES

AN OWNER'S MANUAL

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"In an age when partnerships have become increasingly important, the School-to-Work system offers an opportunity for us to work together in a way that will benefit all Montanans. Montana's School-to-Work transition system will link business executives, shop owners, organized labor, ranchers and farmers with teachers, school administrators, parents and students to develop the knowledge and skills businesses need their employees to possess.

"I invite you to become an active partner in your community's effort to more closely link employers, schools and tomorrow's workforce -- Montana's youth."

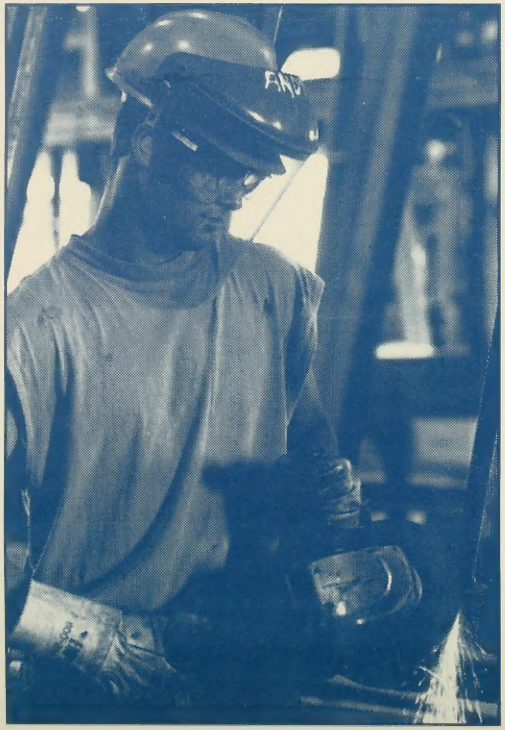
Marc Racicot

Gov. Marc Racicot

MONTANA'S YOUNG PEOPLE DESERVE A CHANCE TO ACHIEVE THE AMERICAN DREAM. THEY DESERVE A GOOD EDUCATION, A GOOD JOB AND A GOOD LIFE...

A good high school education that leads to a good job and continuing education results in the productive and satisfying lifestyle that we enjoy in Montana. The School-to-Work Opportunities initiative ensures that our children will enjoy the same productivity and satisfaction in their lives. School-to-Work is an aggressive and exciting way of learning and teaching that helps all youth achieve high standards. Many doors of opportunity will be opened for our state's youth.

School-to-Work Opportunities will bring the workplace into the classroom. It will transform the workplace into places of learning. It will put hope and enthusiasm back into communities that have watched so many of their young people drift after high school, unprepared for further education or well-paying jobs. And School-to-Work will help employers find workers who are prepared for today's demanding jobs.



WHAT IS SCHOOL-TO-WORK?

Every School-to-Work Opportunities system must contain three core elements known as School-Based Learning, Work-Based Learning and Connecting Activities. School-Based Learning is classroom instruction based on high academic and occupational skill standards. Work-Based Learning is work experience, structured training and mentoring at job sites. And last, Connecting Activities develop courses that integrate classroom and on-the-job instruction, match students with participating employers, train job-site mentors and build and maintain bridges between school and work.

School-to-Work puts in place a clear, comprehensive framework and provides venture capital for states and local partnerships to design systems that help young people make the transition from school to careers. School-to-Work does not establish a new program to add to the multiple existing education and training programs. Rather, it puts in place the infrastructure for a system that's based on existing models and efforts, such as career academies, youth apprenticeship, Tech Prep, Jobs for Montana's Graduates and cooperative education.

"School-to-Work has given me many opportunities for preparing myself for the corporate world. Not only has it built my confidence level, but also it has given me great leadership abilities."

Sydny Conrow, Student
Superior High School

WHY IT MUST HAPPEN NOW

Many young people leaving high school are not equipped with the skills they need to perform the jobs our modern, competitive economy is creating. Too often they flounder in the labor market, wasting a decade or more in intermittent, low-paying jobs.

When this happens, everyone loses. Young people become discouraged because their paychecks and progress fall short of their hopes and expectations. Employers become frustrated because they can't find workers who are adequately prepared for today's more demanding jobs.

School-to-Work attacks these problems head-on. It creates well-defined paths students can follow to move from school to good first jobs or from school to continued education and training. School-to-Work combines quality academic classes at school with hands-on learning and training in the workplace. It builds partnerships between schools, employers, students, parents and community members with local control to meet local needs.

BUILDING A STATE SYSTEM

Community by community, a network of School-to-Work systems is being built in Montana. With the School-to-Work Opportunities Act as the framework for construction, this network will form the basis of a solid state-wide system. Three types of funding are available from the state:

Local Partnership Development Grants:

Competitive grants to local communities for building partnerships.

Local Partnership Continuation Grants:

Extension grants available to communities to continue their development efforts.

Local Implementation Grants:

Competitive grants awarded to communities ready to implement School-to-Work systems.

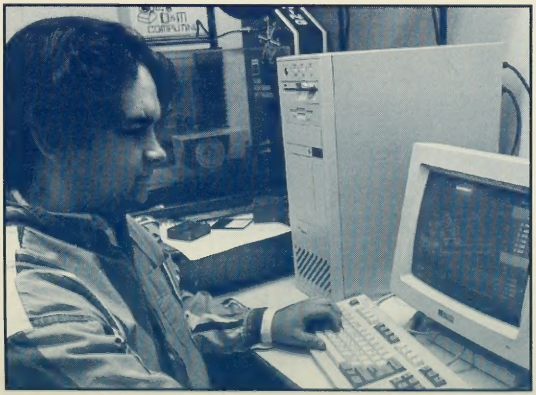
"I believe it is important that children get an education that focuses on getting a job. A School-to-Work system gets kids thinking about careers early, gets kids focused on their education, and provides kids with actual work-based experiences that help them become better prepared to enter the workforce. School-to-Work is good for Montana kids, it is good for Montana businesses and it is good for our communities."

Barbara Charlton, Parent
Helena

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

The School-to-Work initiative is not another top-down federal program. It is an invitation to all sectors of the community to work together in new ways to meet shared and individual needs. Local and state partnerships will drive the planning, implementation and operation of School-to-Work systems.

At all levels consortia are forming to structure day-to-day working relationships and reach out to all who should be involved. At the state level, the Governor's Office, Office of Public Instruction, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Department of Commerce are working together in that same spirit of partnership. These agencies are administering the initiative with an unprecedented degree of shared decision-making and joint team activities.



EVERYONE BENEFITS

STUDENTS:

- Can choose from a wider range of occupations and educational opportunities.
- Have more opportunities for good jobs after graduation.
- Obtain actual work experience while going to school.
- Develop potential contacts that may broaden employment options.
- Boost self-confidence and experience success at school and work.
- Get personal assistance in attaining education and career goals.

EMPLOYERS:

- Gain access to an expanded pool of qualified applicants.
- Influence curriculum development to meet industry requirements.
- Evaluate potential employees in work settings prior

"As an employer, the School-to-Work system has given me the opportunity to work with local high school students in developing a professional relationship with our future workforce."

Jim Hollenback, Owner
Superior Safety Corporation

to hiring.
- Improve the quality of life in the community.

EDUCATORS:

- Increase college placement and employment of graduates.
- Participate in improved opportunities for professional development from recruitment to retirement.
- Integrate academic instruction with actual work and life experiences.
- Reduce dropout rates, improve attendance and increase enrollment.
- Come to better understand real-world applications of academic knowledge.

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY-BASED GROUPS:

- Participate in the development of a skilled workforce.
- Enhance the employability of all youth.
- Stimulate local economic growth through an expanded skilled workforce and taxpayer base.

WHAT IT WILL MEAN FOR MONTANA'S YOUNG PEOPLE

When they enter a School-to-Work system, Montana's students will be on their way to a brighter future.

Graduates will receive a high school diploma or its equivalent in addition to a recognized skills certificate. Some will receive a certificate or diploma recognizing successful completion of one or two years of postsecondary education. Others will enter a registered apprenticeship program or enroll in a college or university or enter the military.

With these credentials and skills, a young person can expect not only to compete for a job in his or her field, but to prosper as well.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Communities that build successful School-to-Work systems often find that the best way to begin is to identify and study a successful model. Information on different models is available from the state office.

In the meantime, here are some ideas to get you started.

"School-to-Work is a winner for all players: students, parents, schools and businesses."

Wayne Erfle, Teacher
Rapelje

IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYER:

- Form a partnership between educators and other interested employers to plan and start a School-to-Work system in your community.
- Help schools develop courses that will prepare students for good jobs that are, or will be, available in the area.
- Provide work experience for School-to-Work students that reinforces and expands on what they are learning in the classroom.
- Hire qualified graduates of School-to-Work systems.

IF YOU ARE AN EDUCATOR:

- Bring colleagues together with employers, unions, parents and others to plan and implement a School-to-Work system.
- Learn about, and experiment with, curricula that are compatible with School-to-Work Opportunities.

Request "how to" manuals from proven models (available from the state office).

- Help students become aware of the range of career options they can pursue through School-to-Work.
- Invest in professional development so teachers, counselors and administrators will be prepared to be partners in reforming the education system.
- Recognize the importance of counselors in building successful School-to-Work systems.

IF YOU ARE A PARENT:

- Let educators, civic organizations and others know of your interest in bringing School-to-Work to your community.
- Volunteer to help build the system and keep it going.

"Organized labor supports initiatives that help students prepare to enter the workforce while they are still in school. The process Montana has gone through to develop School-to-Work initiatives should help to ensure that we do not sacrifice basic academic development, that the integrity of health and safety standards are guaranteed, and that these graduates complement the roles of currently employed workers without displacing them."

Don Judge, Executive Secretary
Montana State AFL-CIO

- Urge your employer to provide work experience for School-to-Work students and volunteer to be their mentor or supervisor.
- Help your child understand the relationship between learning and earning. And teach that performance counts, both in school and on the job.
- Encourage local schools and employers to require and reward achievement.

IF YOU ARE A STUDENT:

- Tell your teachers and school administrators you are interested in School-to-Work.
- Talk to your friends about how School-to-Work could help them start on the road to a good job or continued education.
- Ask your parents to show support for a School-to-Work system in your community.
- Join or form a career club that supports your

occupational interest and can become an advocate for School-to-Work.

- Aim high and make a commitment to your future.

IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF A LABOR ORGANIZATION:

- Collaborate with state and local officials, employers and schools to design a local School-to-Work system.
- Mobilize your local union training committee to offer high-quality training and meaningful work experience to students in School-to-Work.
- Become a mentor in the workplace.
- Provide information on different types of jobs available in your community.
- Educate your organization about School-to-Work through the local education officer of your union.

"School-to-work creates a cohesive system from our many quality education programs. It provides all of our students with academic excellence and real-life work experiences to prepare them for success in stimulating, skilled and high-paying careers in Montana."

Jane Karas, Ph. D.
Director for Workforce Development
Montana University System

IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION:

- Collaborate with state and local officials, employers and schools to design a local School-to-Work system that reaches all types of youth, including dropouts.
- Work with educators and employers to ensure opportunities for young women to participate in School-to-Work.
- Work with employers and schools to provide opportunities for students from high-poverty areas or low-income families who might have low achievement levels or limited English proficiency.
- Serve as a broker between local employers, schools and parents to help establish working partnerships.
- Mobilize support for students most at risk of failure or dropping out.

YES, I WANT TO MAKE SCHOOL-TO-WORK OPPORTUNITIES HAPPEN IN MY COMMUNITY

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If you want more information about the School-to-Work Opportunities system, call or write the state School-to-Work office at:

School to Work

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